DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 102 922 HE 006 307

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TITLE Proposed System for Rewarding and Improving Instructional Effectiveness.
PUB DATE Jun 74
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Effective Teaching; *Evaluation Methods; *Higher Education; *Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Improvement; Teaching; Teaching Quality

ABSTRACT

If institutions of higher education are serious about encouraging excellence in teaching, then they must be prepared to reward such excellence in a manner similar to that for excellence in scholarly achievement. The first step to achieve this goal would be to establish a standard system of evaluating instructional effectiveness that would have as its two major outcomes (a) reward for success and (b) guidance for improvement. Evaluation of student attitudes about instructors and instruction is perhaps the most commonly used method of assessing instructional effectiveness. The quality of student learning is another very important variable to consider. The student attitude or rating data should be presented to the instructor in an easily readable and interpretable format. Faculty (peer) and department head attitudes and judgments should be presented to the faculty member in an easily interpretable report. If part or all of the assessments of instructional effectiveness are not highly positive, then the instructor should determine what needs to be done to improve the institutional weaknesses. These needs could then be presented in the form of a proposal. The higher level administration of both the institution and the faculty should accept and encourage the use of such a system as an integral part of the institutional reward scheme. (Author/PG)

Session No. 9.09

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PROPOSED SYSTEM FOR REWARDING AND IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS[1]

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When a graduate student attains the Ph.D. degree and prepares to embark on his professional career at any one of the major universities in the United States or abroad, he is still generally quite impressionable. For instance, when his department head or dean tells him that the institution embraces the three general objectives of excellence in research, teaching, and service and that rewards are based upon satisfactory to excellent performance in any one or a combination of those objectives, the new faculty member may believe that this is the case. The sad fact is that after a short period of time at his institution, he realizes that although the three objectives of research, teaching, and service are appropriate for any institution of higher education, most of the institutions reward faculty primarily for their performance in the research function.

This is a disturbing state of affairs because it means, basically, that the institution is only interested in supporting and encouraging excellence in research. Its consequences are obvious in that faculty, regardless of their interest, will neglect their teaching and service activities in order to attain the professional recognition required to

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[1]The author prepared this paper while on sabbatical leave of absence at the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel, June, 1974.

[2]The author is indebted to Joseph S. Marcus for his constructive suggestions.

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remain and succeed at their institution. Students are perhaps the most unfortunate pawns in such a game, since they are forced to take courses from faculty who are not able or willing to take the time to prepare and organize their courses or to do such things as spend time outside of class discussing problems and concerns that would help most students learn material better.

Some take the position that there is no inconsistency in this type of skewed reward system since it is suggested that excellent researchers are, in fact, the best teachers. The research evidence (see Aleamoni, 1974), however, does not support this point and shows that, in general, there is no relationship between scholarly productivity and effective teaching.

It is further suggested that the evaluation of scholarly productivity is much easier, more valid, and more reliable than is the evaluation of instructional effectiveness. This is probably the most critical point in the problem of rewarding faculty at institutions of higher education. It can best be exemplified by quoting from the November, 1971, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign pamphlet on Promotion and Tenure Policies of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences beginning on page 4:

> "Evaluation of teaching is difficult, but evaluation based on systematically gathered data into broad categories of 'excellent', 'good', 'average', and 'poor' is possible. Among the most useful kinds of evaluative evidence are testimony of executive officers, especially when based on student interviews covering several semesters, comments of colleagues who are well acquainted with the teaching performance of the candidate, achievement of students, and the quality of teaching materials prepared by the staff member. A significant element in the evaluation of teaching is the overall judgement of students, and the department is responsible for obtaining such information

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on all staff members, particularly those recommended for promotion. Questionnaires developed in cooperation with the Office of Instructional Resources may be used for this purpose, or a similar procedure can be followed which is designed to reflect comprehensive judgement concerning teaching qualities. Faculty members whose records consistently reflect poor teaching should normally not be recommended for promotion.

In unusual circumstances, tenure may be recommended for demonstrated excellence in teaching even in the absence of significant published research. Nevertheless, the Executive Committee believes that the qualifications for teaching and scholarship are very closely related. The teacher who does not keep current with developing knowledge in his field or who is not constantly searching for new insights does not have a future as a classroom teacher in the College. Graduate as well as undergraduate instruction is a responsibility of the faculty of this College; a continuing interest in, and a capacity for, creative scholarship by a faculty member is essential for effective instruction for undergraduate as well as graduate students. A faculty member who lacks the qualifications to teach advanced students will not be recommended for promotion to senior ranks.

Unlike the assessment of teaching, an accurate judgement of scholarly achievement generally may be made best by the academic community at large. To be considered for promotion to an associate professorship, the candidate should have done work of sufficient quality to have gained recognition by his peers and standing in his profession. A person to be considered for a professorship should be a scholar who has achieved national distinction.

Evidence of favorable judgement by colleagues includes publication in journals where expert evaluation is required for acceptance, favorable reviews of books, appointments or awards that require evaluation of professional competence, election to office in learned societies, and receipt of fellowships.

Although departments have the first responsibility for evaluating the quality of the work of a candidate for tenure or promotion, it is within the scope of the Executive Committee's responsibility to gather confirming evidence of scholarly competence by seeking the comments of other scholars within and without the University."

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The quote presented on the previous page reflects the policies of most institutions of higher education. It is important to note that this policy indicates that, regardless of the quality of the evaluative teaching evidence, published research will still take precedence in the reward considerations. It also states that the relationship between teaching and scholarship is believed to be high and positive even though, as was stated above, the research evidence to date does not support this belief. If the institutions of higher education are really only interested in rewarding research productivity, then they do not need large student enrollments nor do they need to offer a large number of courses. Instead, they should concentrate on having their faculty do only research and admit small numbers of graduate students who can work directly with the faculty in their research projects. This means that teaching and service activities should be relegated to undergraduate teaching institutions.

Now, let us look more closely at the criteria used to judge scholarly achievement. In the above quote they rest basically on the belief that judgments by colleagues (synonomous with "the academic community at large") provide the final evidence. These judgments include (a) publication in journals where expert evaluation is required for acceptance, (b) favorable reviews of books, (c) appointments or awards that require evaluation of

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fessional competence, (d) election to office in learned societies, and (e) receipt of fellowships. If one looks closely at the above judgments, it is obvious that each of these is very subjective; in fact, it would be very difficult to find a set of objective criteria on which many colleagues could agree when judging journal publications, books, etc. Anyone who has read several advisory editors' reviews of their article or experienced the acceptance of a once rejected article by another reputable journal could attest to this subjectivity.

Where then is the rationale for maintaining that the evaluation of teaching based on (a) the testimony of executive officers, (b) comments of colleagues who are well acquainted with the teaching performance of the instructor, (c) achievement of students, (d) quality of teaching materials prepared by the instructor, and (e) the judgments of students exposed to the instructor, is more subjective, less reliable and less accurate than the judgments of scholarly achievement? Apparently, the answer lies in the fact that the methods and techniques used in evaluating scholarly achievement have remained unchanged for so long that they have become accepted as standard without question or evaluation. In contrast, the evaluation of teaching has been subject to a wide variety of approaches with no commonly accepted methods or techniques except for student judgments gathered via rating forms, some of which have not, admittedly, been professionally designed.

If institutions of higher education are serious about encouraging excellence in teaching, then they must be prepared to reward such excellence in a manner similar to that for excellence in scholarly achievement. The first step in achieving this goal would be to establish a standard

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system of evaluating instructional effectiveness which would have as its two major outcomes (a) reward for success and (b) guidance for improvement. The rest of this paper will be devoted to outlining just such a system for rewarding and improving instructional effectiveness.

Methods of Assessing Instructional Effectiveness

Evaluation of student attitudes about instructors and instruction is perhaps the most commonly used method of assessing instructional effectiveness. The rationale for this is that students are assumed to be the only ones who are constantly exposed to the elements of the course (e.g., instructor, text book, homework, course content, method of instruction, etc.) and, therefore, the most logical evaluators of the quality and effectiveness of those elements. In addition, student attitudes should indicate areas of rapport, degrees of communication, or the existence of problems and thereby help instructors as well as instructional resource personnel describe and define the learning environment more concretely and objectively than they could through other types of measurements. Such attitudes can be ascertained simply by determining the number of students who agree or disagree with certain statements about the course, or by asking students to write short essays about the course in order to obtain information about their experiences under specific instructional situations. Such individualized procedures do not, however, provide an opportunity to compare the results of one course with results of another. Measurement is more useful when comparative results are available. Thus more adequate interpretation will occur (a) when the data has been collected in a standardized fashion with appropriate attention given to

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sampling, reliability, and validity; and (b) when many instructors and instructional programs have been measured with the same instrument so that comparisons can be made (Aleamoni and Spencer, 1973). An additional source of useful information might be ratings by graduating seniors of their instructors and instruction (Drucker and Remmers, 1950, 1951; Aleamoni and Yimer, 1974).

Faculty (peer) and department head attitudes and judgments represent another method of assessment. These should be based upon an evaluation of (a) the procedural adequacy of the course(s); (b) the appropriateness of the course content; (c) the appropriateness of the course objectives; (d) the adequacy and quality of the course examinations; (e) the instructor's self-report; and (f) other course materials or comments which the instructor wishes to submit. Such evaluations should be made by departmental review committees with well-structured guidelines and criteria of excellence.

The quality of student learning is another very important variable to consider. It would be possible to get a measure of student achievement in a course by employing departmental or agreed upon nationally standardized examinations in the subject matter area. These could be used as final examinations or as part of the final examination. Other measures could be obtained by follow-up measurements of student performance in succeeding courses or by following the students after they have left the university and recording their performance at other institutions of higher education or in their jobs or professions. These measures should then be evaluated by a departmental review committee utilizing instructional resource personnel where needed.

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Feedback to the Instructor

The student attitude or rating data should be presented to the instructor in an easily readable and interpretable format. Student responses to the questionnaire items should be reported in summary form for each course and appropriate normative comparisons should be made between the mean scores in the instructor's course (by each item and groups of items) and means for similar instructors teaching similar courses in the same department, college, and university. For other examples of appropriate normative comparisons, see Costin, Greenough, and Menges (1971) and Aleamoni (1972, 1974).

The instructor should be provided with additional interpretation material as well as with the possibility of consultation with the instructional resource personnel responsible for providing the student attitudinal information. Any additional evaluative information and resources needed in this area should also be discussed with the instructional resource personnel. All interpretation material and consultation should concentrate on identifying instructional strengths and weaknesses and then agreeing on what should be done to remedy the weaknesses.

Faculty (peer) and department head attitudes and judgments should be presented to the faculty member in an easily readable and interpretable report. This report should outline the committee and individual judgments made on each element of the instructional setting considered and identify the strengths and weaknesses observed. Constructive criticisms that would allow the instructor to plan a strategy for improvement of the areas of weakness should appear in the report. Personal consultation

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should take place between the department head and the faculty member concerning all aspects of this report. The department head should explain the options or resources available to the instructor to help him in his attempt to improve his instructional weaknesses.

The quality of student learning data gathered should also be presented to the instructor in an easily readable and interpretable report similar to the one for faculty (peer) and department head attitudes and judgments. This report, however, should concentrate on the achievement of course, department, college, and university instructional objectives.

The department head should hold individual conferences with instructors concerning all the evaluations that have been conducted and what they mean to the instructor. (This, of course, assumes that the department head understands the evaluations made.) The department head should be emphasizing what the instructor needs to do in order to rectify the weaknesses or problems uncovered in the various evaluations made. The department head should be clarifying how such evaluations and efforts will be used in the rank, pay, and tenure considerations of the individual faculty member.

Options for the Instructor

If all the assessments of instructional effectiveness are highly positive, then no more evaluations or data are needed. All the reports, etc., of the evaluations should be placed in the instructor's departmental file to be used for rank, pay, and tenure considerations.

If part or all of the assessments of instructional effectiveness are not highly positive, then the instructor should determine (with the

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possible aid of instructional resource personnel as well as the department head) what needs to be done to improve the instructional weaknesses. These needs could then be presented in the form of a proposal generated in the following manner.

1. The instructor should draft a proposal outlining what needs to be done, what instructional resources will be needed, how long it will take, how much it will cost, and how it will be evaluated.

2. He should discuss his proposal with his department head and obtain any necessary approval (if needed) and additional resources (if needed).

3. He also should discuss his proposal with the appropriate instructional resource personnel to determine what services are available to him in trying to implement the proposal.

4. Finally, the instructor should modify the proposal according to the suggestions made in his discussions with the department and instructional resource personnel.

Implementation of the Instructional Improvement Proposal and the Project's Final Report

Once a final draft of the proposal is generated and all approvals obtained and resources identified, the instructor should initiate the timetable needed to implement his proposal.

After the instructional improvement project has been completed and all the evaluation has been done, the instructor should prepare a comprehensive final report. Instructional resource personnel could be used at this point if needed. The final report and the proposal should then be

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submitted to the department head and placed in the instructor's departmental file for use in rank, pay, and tenure considerations.

Administrative Procedure for Considering Instruction in the Institutional Reward System

If all of the instructional effectiveness assessments were highly positive, then that evidence should be considered relative to the teaching load required of the faculty member. That evidence should be weighted appropriately in a "teaching + research + service" equation in arriving at rank, pay, and tenure recommendations.

If an instructional improvement proposal and final report are in the instructor's departmental file, then they should be carefully analyzed and evaluated by a departmental review committee utilizing methods and techniques similar to those in evaluating scholarly achievement. This evidence should be considered proportionate to (a) the teaching load required of the faculty member and (b) the time needed to generate the proposal, complete the project, and write up the final report. That evidence should be weighted accordingly in a "teaching improvement effort + teaching + research + service" equation in arriving at rank, pay, and tenure recommendations.

In conclusion, the higher level administration of both the institution and the faculty should accept and encourage the use of such a system as an integral part of the institutional reward scheme. Not to do so betrays a lack of interest in and a lack of concern with instruction and instructional improvement.

It should be noted that some of the methods of assessing instructional effectiveness are already being used in a few institutions of higher education in the United States.

Although the service component was not treated in this paper, a similar evaluation system should be developed for it.

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